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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUKAN (Slovakia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 108 (a): RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION (continued) (A/C.3/48/L.12)

AGENDA ITEM 111: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/48/3 (chap. VII.C), A/48/38, A/48/98, A/48/124-S/25506, A/48/182, A/48/187-E/1993/76, A/48/279, A/48/301, A/48/338, A/48/354, A/48/359, A/48/413 and A/48/513; A/C.3/48/L.5)

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AGENDA ITEM 113: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/C.3/48/L.21-L.24 and L.26-L.29)

1. Ms. MARTENS (Norway) requested that a correction should be made to the record of the vote on draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.12 entitled "Use of mercenaries as a means to violate human rights and to impede the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination". Norway had not voted against the resolution; it had abstained.

2. Ms. FRECHETTE (Canada) said that, despite the persistence of civil and inter-communal conflicts, drought, hunger, the declining role of women in some areas of public life and the lack of real participation by women in economic and political decision-making, there had been some important developments for women during the past year. The World Conference on Human Rights, held in June 1993 at Vienna, had adopted a strong text on women's rights and equality. Preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women were well under way and a Secretary-General of the Conference had been named. She was confident that the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women would be adopted by the General Assembly at its current session, which showed that, despite the obstacles, it was worth continuing the struggle for the recognition of the rights and equality of women.

3. In Canada, the final report of the Canadian Panel on Violence against Women had shown violence to be widespread and common to all economic and social groups. As well as identifying the extent of the problem, the Panel had presented a national action plan aimed at the total eradication of that type of violence. Canada also took an interest in violence against women in the rest of the world and had cooperated with many Member States from all regions to produce the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women. A key element of the declaration was its identification of violence against women as a human rights abuse, since none of the international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, explicitly referred to violence against women, in particular in the home. The declaration was the first human rights instrument to contain a definition of forms of violence against women, including physical, sexual and psychological violence, and to outline the administrative, social and educational measures that should be taken by States to eradicate such violence. Canada therefore called upon all Member States to support the adoption of the declaration, which concerned a form of violence that no society, whatever their

(Ms. Frechette, Canada)

social, economic, political, cultural, traditional or religious differences, could support or promote.

4. Furthermore, Canada shared the conviction, expressed in the Final Declaration and Programme of Action of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, that women's rights were an integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. It would therefore continue to promote the integration of women's human rights throughout the United Nations system in cooperation with all the relevant bodies of the United Nations. In that connection, Canada supported the call for the Commission on Human Rights to appoint a special rapporteur on violence against women at its forthcoming session. It also called upon the Commission on the Status of Women to develop an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women addressing the issue of violence against women. Her delegation reiterated its request that the topic of women's equality should be integrated into the agenda of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the preparations for the 1995 World Summit for Social Development.

5. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women was arousing keen interest in her country because it would provide an opportunity not only to review and appraise the results obtained in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies but also to plan the second phase of the implementation of those strategies, which would be crucial for the ultimate achievement of equality between women and men. Furthermore, Canada welcomed the appointment of Ms. Gertrude Mongella of the United Republic of Tanzania as Secretary-General of the Conference. In anticipation of the Conference, for which active preparations were under way by government departments and non-governmental organizations in Canada, the Federal Government had asked women's groups and other non-governmental organizations for their inputs to the Canadian contribution to the Platform for Action of the Conference. It viewed the involvement of non-governmental organizations in both the Conference preparations and the Conference itself as essential. The Federal Government was therefore looking forward to an early indication of the criteria for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the Conference.

6. With respect to the participation of women in the United Nations Secretariat, Canada applauded the Secretary-General's stated intent to increase significantly the number of women at professional and senior levels in the Secretariat. It also hoped that the other United Nations agencies would follow that example and that all the Member States would give their full support to the commendable efforts of the Secretary-General in that area.

7. Canada, which was always prepared to accept innovative proposals aimed at optimizing available resources, supported the proposal to integrate the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which could result in a particularly effective mechanism for the advancement of women. However, there would be a need to ensure that that new body had adequate resources at its disposal, since reorganization and streamlining of the United Nations system should not be an excuse to cut back on the already meagre resources allocated to the advancement of women.

(Ms. Frechette, Canada)

8. Canada, which attached great importance to the question of sexual harassment, had, at the previous session of the General Assembly, welcomed the announcement that guidelines on the subject were to be issued by the Secretary-General. That first important step, having been taken, however, it was now time to review the adequacy and impact of the guidelines. Canada would continue to monitor the situation closely in that field, because it strongly believed that the United Nations, as the protector of human rights throughout the world, must be a world leader in the protection of individual staff rights.

9. Mrs. AVEMEKA (Congo) said that her country had always cared about the problems affecting women, and it had thus given unflagging support to the various undertakings in that sphere, on both regional and global levels. In the firm conviction that harmonious, sustainable development called for the participation of both men and women it welcomed the efforts of the international community, and especially those of the United Nations system, to ensure that the crucial role women played in every society was universally acknowledged. That said, the role of women in modern society was less a problem of participation in development than of participating in decision-making, considering that women represented more than half the world population and contributed proportionately to the production of global resources.

10. Despite the efforts of the United Nations system, the status of women had worsened in recent years, especially in the developing countries, and even more so in Africa. In the Congo, although women were protected by the Constitution as well as by a number of legislative and regulatory texts, they remained in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis men, owing to their multiple responsibilities and to the burden of cultural and social values that hampered their own self-fulfilment. Domestic work, still their exclusive domain in both urban and rural zones, was an important contribution which should be valued by society and included among the economic indicators. With regard to productivity, their considerable contribution to agriculture and trade failed to result in tangible improvements in their quality of life. That situation was exacerbated by the global crisis and by the burden of external debt. Structural adjustment programmes exacted a high social cost, and women were the first to suffer. In the view of the Congo, the policies of the international financial institutions, which dictated economic measures to Governments at the expense of women and children, were hindering the growth of women in developing countries and especially in the Congo. If that aspect of the problem remained unresolved, any and every promise made on behalf of the advancement of women would be worthless.

11. She cited, among other positive developments, the spread of grass-roots movements in the Congo, supported by the democratic process, which could promote effective social action in the areas of health, education and economic autonomy. The recent creation of the government department for the integration of women into development would likewise allow for greater participation of women in decision-making.

12. The Congo attached great importance to the various international conferences that were scheduled. In preparation, it planned to hold a national forum on women, the goal of which would be to evaluate the impact, in the Congo, of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for Women, to draft a priority agenda at the national level, to set up a national preparatory committee for the 1995

(Mrs. Avemeka, Congo)

Fourth World Conference on Women and to prepare Congo's contribution to the 1994 regional conference in Dakar.

13. The employment of women in the United Nations system deserved special attention, and women's equitable participation, on a geographical and linguistic basis, must be achieved.

14. Mr. SOH (Republic of Korea) said that while the end of the Cold War had enabled countries to devote themselves to social and economic development, much remained to be done, especially with regard to the participation of women in development. Korea supported two of the objectives on the rights of women set forth in the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights, namely, the elimination of all forms of sexist discrimination and the full and equal participation of women in the economic, social and cultural sectors.

15. His delegation attached great importance to the Fourth World Conference for Women to be held at Beijing in 1995, since it should enable the international community to make advances on behalf of women and to translate ideas into actions. The active participation of Governments and international organizations, and especially of non-governmental organizations, in the preparations for that Conference was thus essential. At the national level, the National Committee to Review Women's Policies, which reported to the Office of the Prime Minister, had been named the official body responsible for preparations for the Conference. The national report was under way, and workshops and seminars were being held. The recent visit of Ms. Gertrude Mongella, the Conference's Secretary-General, had increased interest in the Conference and imparted momentum to the debate on the advancement of women. The Republic of Korea also looked forward to the forthcoming 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, which should make it possible to broach women's issues from various angles.

16. The Republic of Korea was pleased to note that 128 countries had already acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and, because it was crucial that its provisions should be implemented, expressed the hope that those countries that had not yet done so would accede forthwith. In that regard, the recommendations made on the basis of national reports by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women deserved close study.

17. De jure equality did not automatically result in de facto equality; even if the legal and institutional structures were in place, only when women gained a deeper knowledge of their rights and society changed its behaviour and attitudes could lasting results be achieved. The Republic of Korea had accordingly co-sponsored the resolution on women and legal literacy at the thirty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It had also adopted various measures designed to remove social barriers to the equality of women: school curricula had been modified to avoid male and female stereotyping; the admission policies of certain vocational colleges traditionally reserved for men now included women, and government support was being extended to institutions offering educational programmes which favoured the equitable representation of women in society.

(Mr. Soh, Republic of Korea)

18. The Government of the Republic of Korea, condemning all forms of violence against women, had issued guidelines to all its ministries in that regard. Special legislation was being drafted which would punish the perpetrators of violence against women and would decree the establishment of protection facilities and counselling services for victimized women. As one of the sponsors of the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, the Republic of Korea attached great importance to its adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. It also welcomed the decision taken by the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-ninth session to consider appointing, at its next session, a special rapporteur to study violence against women.

19. He then drew the Committee's attention to the issue of women refugees, who were often subjected to abuse during travel or in camps. National, regional and international efforts should be strengthened to protect them. In that connection he welcomed the close cooperation between the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in increasing public awareness of the plight of women refugees.

20. With regard to the Secretary-General's report on the situation of women in rural areas (A/48/187-E/1993/76), he noted that, despite the measures that had been taken, the rights of women in rural areas generally remained unrecognized. Each country should therefore pay special attention to improving the status of such women by incorporating relevant measures into their development policies.

21. Turning to the question of women's participation in policy-making, which was essential for women's advancement, he said it was regrettable that women were a rarity in decision-making positions, in legislative bodies and in the higher levels of Government. The United Nations should set an example in that sphere. He commended the Secretary-General's intention to have an equal ratio of men and women in policy-making positions by 1995, but he believed that more concentrated efforts should be made to meet the goals set in General Assembly resolution 45/239 C, giving due consideration to women from unrepresented or underrepresented countries.

22. Ms. ACHMAD (Indonesia) said that de facto discrimination against women persisted throughout the world despite the developments in the post-cold-war era and the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and countless other resolutions. Although there had been progress in certain regions, where there had been some improvements in the working conditions of women, it was minimal: women continued to occupy a disproportionately low level of policy- and decision-making positions. They were also particularly at risk when the economic situation was difficult. Moreover, their pay, for equal work, was always lower than that of men and social support services for working parents remained inadequate. One solution to all the problems was to adjust the existing system of recruitment, placement and promotion to take into account the fact that women were entering the workforce at an unprecedented rate. Those were some of the issues that needed to be confronted before the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace was held in

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1995, so as to ensure that the Platform for Action adopted by the World Conference took them into account. Following resolutions 37/5 - on women and legal literacy - and 37/6 - on women and development - of the Commission on the Status of Women, Indonesia ran national legal literacy programmes to heighten the awareness of both women and men of their equality under the law. It also carried out training in gender analysis techniques and in gender-sensitive and -responsive planning for planners in ministries, provincial governments and non-governmental organizations. A gender sensitivity course for bodies of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had been conducted in Bali, Indonesia, in February 1993 by the Asian Institute of Management.

23. As for the promotion of the equal status and human rights of women, Indonesia had participated actively in the deliberations at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, particularly on the subject of violence against women. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women, recommended by the World Conference for adoption by the General Assembly.

24. Resolution 37/9 of the Commission on the Status of Women clearly showed the measures the United Nations should take to maintain its central role in advancing the status of women at a time when it was restructuring its economic and social activities. As the resolution itself pointed out, however, the restructuring should be carried out with caution; the work programme of the United Nations on the advancement of women should be strengthened and its coordination with other economic and social programmes should be improved. In that connection, Indonesia supported the revision of the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001, following the adoption of the Platform for Action by the World Conference in September 1995.

25. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (A/48/413), with its detailed analysis of the work done within the United Nations system and the way in which its organization had cooperated on women's issues, including the preparations for the World Conference. It was encouraging to see the work done to develop methodologies for measuring pay inequalities in the informal sector and to analyse the issue of rural and migrant women workers. In connection with the Forward-looking Strategies, she informed the Committee that a meeting on the Network of Indicators and Statistics on Women had been held in Jakarta by the ASEAN member countries in June-July 1993. Within Indonesia itself considerable efforts were being made to improve the collection and dissemination of statistics and to develop indicators on the participation of women in development. Indeed, 54 women's study centres had been established in state and private universities. To strengthen cooperation between such centres, the Government provided funds, through the Ministry of Education, for the organization of an annual communication forum for them. Moreover, women's studies constituted one of the six strategic areas for research at the national level within the 1993-1994 budget period. Such varied measures and activities signalled the commitment of the Government, the scientific community and the public sector to the advancement of women.

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26. As in previous years, her delegation wished to emphasize that as the United Nations Secretariat played a key role in the advancement of women and must comply with the principles contained in the Charter, it must continue to make every effort to improve the position of women. Such improvement should take the form of an increase in the percentage of women occupying high-level policy-making posts in the Secretariat. The report of the Secretary-General on the status of women in the Secretariat (A/48/513) clearly reflected the Secretariat's failure to attain the target of having women occupy 35 per cent of posts subject to geographical distribution, because of the recruitment freeze and the difficulties that the freeze had caused. Her delegation wished to propose that while recruitment was still frozen, preference should be given to women, particularly women from developing countries, whenever an exception to the freeze was made.

27. Her delegation had carefully studied the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/48/38). While it welcomed the fact that the pre-session working group had helped to reduce the Committee's considerable workload, it had nevertheless noted that it had not always been able to consider country reports within the time allotted. However, the procedures adopted by the Committee should enable it to carry out its work more efficiently and expeditiously and the possible preparation by the Secretariat of an annual pre-session document on ways and means of improving the work of the Committee should have the same effect.

28. With regard to the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, her delegation wished to emphasize that it was in favour of convening the inter-sessional working group of the Commission on the Status of Women with a view to working on the draft Platform for Action to be adopted by the Conference. It hoped that the group would take into consideration the second update of the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development and that the final draft of the Platform for Action would take account of the plans of action adopted by the regional preparatory meetings, by Governments and non-governmental organizations. Lastly, it was to be hoped that the Platform for Action would clearly identify measures to meet the practical and strategic needs of women and encourage equality between men and women in all fields.

29. As host country for the regional meeting for Asia and the Pacific, Indonesia was pleased to inform the Committee that preparations for the meeting were under way in close cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific secretariat. The non-governmental organizations would be meeting in mid-November at Manila and the expert group for the drafting of the ESCAP plan of action was scheduled to meet at the end of January 1994 at Bangkok. In Indonesia, preparations for the regional meeting had begun in 1992 with studies on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Its country report, which was to be submitted to the ESCAP secretariat at the end of the month, had been completed during a national seminar which had been held recently.

30. In conclusion, her Government wished to recall that it was committed to participating fully in the preparatory activities for the Fourth World Conference on Women and in the Conference itself. The Conference should be able to devise better global strategies for the advancement of women to the twenty-

(Ms. Achmad, Indonesia)

first century within the context of other prime objectives such as the revival of the world economy, the acceleration of sustainable socio-economic development in developing countries and, above all, the eradication of poverty in the broadest sense.

31. Mrs. FRITSCHE (Liechtenstein) said that she wished to associate herself with the statement made by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the Nordic countries, to the effect that the Fourth World Conference on Women should be allocated sufficient budgetary resources and be treated in the same way as other comparable conferences.

32. Her delegation considered that the United Nations must set an example with regard to the integration of women into the decision-making process and wished to stress the importance it accorded to increasing the number of women in the Secretariat, in particular in senior-level posts. It was to be hoped that the reaffirmed commitment of the Secretary-General in that field would lead to tangible action in time for the World Conference and the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

33. The long struggle by women to free themselves from gender-based violence had taken on increased urgency as a result of the systematic rape and torture of tens of thousands of women in the former Yugoslavia. The perpetrators of those war crimes must be brought before an international war crimes tribunal.

34. Family violence was often accepted in communities in which it occurred and overlooked by the authorities or even condoned in the name of cultural specificity. Violence undermined both family life and economic development since battered women were many times more likely than other women to require psychiatric help or to resort to alcohol or drugs. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other United Nations human rights instruments addressed the rights of women, but those who were traditionally in a position to determine what constituted a human rights violation had tended to view violence against women as a private matter. However, women were becoming more aware of their strength and their ability to defend themselves and as a result the need to develop alternative methods of conflict resolution had become more apparent. Her delegation therefore welcomed the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women, which affirmed that violence impaired, and even nullified, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and it wished to express its support for the appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women.

35. As long as family responsibilities were shouldered mainly by women, equal opportunities could not become a reality. Family responsibilities had to be shared and men must work as genuine partners with women. Including an item on the constructive role of men in improving the status of women could add a new dimension to the agenda of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

36. Ms. SEMAFAMU (Uganda) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women would be an excellent opportunity for the global community to redouble its efforts at attaining the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. Those three objectives of equality, development and peace continued to reflect the aspirations of women world wide, which showed that

(Ms. Semafamu, Uganda)

action taken so far had been inadequate. The Conference should therefore discuss ways of moving forward and not confine itself to reiterating existing problems or repeating the accomplishments and failures of action taken in favour of women. The success of the Conference would depend on the specific strategies and objectives of its platform for action. The Conference should adapt or strengthen the institutions which would carry the global programme for women into the twenty-first century.

37. As a country whose population and economy were predominantly rural, Uganda attached great importance to the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas. Her delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the question (A/48/187) but considered that it should have been extended to cover agricultural and economic trends and policies at the regional and international levels because they had a significant impact on the situation of rural women at the local level. With regard to action taken at the national level in favour of women the lack of human and financial resources, the absence of local networks and the scarcity of technical expertise had constrained Governments to implement small-income generating projects which, moreover, were often in marginal areas of production. As a result, the impact of the projects on the overall situation of women had been minimal.

38. In recent years, the global community had tended, as far as the advancement of women was concerned, to rely more on non-governmental organizations and relevant ministries than on national machineries for women and as a result it had experienced some difficulties in formulating and implementing coherent policies and in coordinating its activities. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, adequate attention must be given to the quest for a balance between micro and macro level interventions as well as to the adaptation to prevailing circumstances of the institutions created as part of the follow-up to the Third World Conference on Women. With respect to the balance between micro and macro level interventions, Uganda supported the approach to food security adopted by the Africa Investment Plan of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

39. Any decision relating to the proposed merger of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and UNIFEM should be based on a transparent and thorough discussion of the political, technical, legal, administrative and financial implications. It was regrettable that the failure by the Secretary-General to make the report on the subject available on time had denied the Committee an opportunity to hold informed deliberations on the question.

40. Her delegation had studied the reports on the work of the two organizations, contained in documents A/48/301 and A/48/279 and felt that they provided little information on the manner in which the activities of the two bodies fed into and reinforced each other; it was convinced that there was room for improvement in the institutional links between the two organizations. For example, whereas UNIFEM's development programmes could benefit from some of INSTRAW's research activities, UNIFEM could put some of the programme resources spent on hiring consultants to more tangible use; ultimately that would be particularly beneficial to the United Nations programme for the advancement of women. INSTRAW could benefit more from the field experience of UNIFEM which

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would help INSTRAW to refine its research activities. The activities of INSTRAW could also be useful in evaluating the work of UNIFEM and improving it, where necessary.

41. Concerning the draft declaration on violence against women also before the Committee at the current session, the definition of violence against women had been expanded in an attempt to remove the distinction between the public and the private domain. However, in order to be all encompassing, it needed to be further expanded to take into account the psychological as well as socio-economic aspects of the issue. In addition, the draft declaration would have to be supplemented by concrete measures in order to ensure that the acts of violence, as defined by the declaration, were appropriately addressed at the national level.

42. In Uganda, as in many other countries, customary law remained in effect alongside positive law. In an effort to address the discriminatory aspects of tradition with respect to women, Uganda's draft Constitution not only provided for full equality between men and women and for the right of women to affirmative action to redress existing imbalances but also prohibited customs and traditions that undermined the welfare, dignity and interests of women. Nevertheless, experience showed that despite positive law, many cases of violence against women were not adequately addressed. Innovative strategies must be found to educate both men and women to encourage them to re-evaluate the rationale for certain harmful cultural practices and other forms of violence mentioned in the draft declaration on violence against women. In that connection, her delegation supported the proposal for the appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women who might be able to come up with constructive recommendations in that area.

43. At the World Conference on Human Rights and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, women had managed to put their concerns on the global agenda. Those achievements underscored the importance of concerted action between Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and between men and women at the local, regional and international levels. She hoped women would again be able to make their voices heard at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

44. The transfer to New York of the Division for the Advancement of Women as part of the ongoing exercise of restructuring of United Nations activities, would enable a greater number of delegations to participate in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, which was the preparatory body for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Uganda looked forward to participating in the Commission's deliberations.

45. Mr. KASOULIDES (Cyprus) said that the struggle for the elimination of all forms of discrimination, especially gender discrimination, concerned all countries, even the most economically developed. It was important to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as it provided ways and methods for women to achieve their rightful status in society. In his report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/48/354) the

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Secretary-General had indicated that 125 States had ratified the Convention. The report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/48/38) indicated some of the progress and failures in the implementation of the Convention. He urged all States to ratify the Convention or accede to it and took note of the efforts to coordinate the work of the Convention with that of other human rights instruments in an effort to avoid duplication and overlapping of activities. It would be easier, especially for small States, to implement the Convention and to monitor its implementation if a single report had to be presented.

46. The living conditions of most women had deteriorated throughout the world inter alia as a result of gender based discrimination. It was the United Nations responsibility to create and foster conditions conducive to ensuring that the struggle of women for equality remained a global priority. It was also the Organization's responsibility to pursue efforts with a view to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions relating to the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. In his report on the question (A/48/513), the Secretary-General had recognized its importance. However, the goal of a 35 per cent overall participation rate of women by 1995 could only be attained through the efforts and good will of the entire international community. Priority must also be given to the employment of women from the 76 Member States that had no women employed at all in the Secretariat.

47. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (A/48/413), and strongly supported the efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and strengthen assistance to victims of violence. The situation was particularly grave in areas of conflict where the perpetrators of rapes, sexual abuse and inhuman treatment should be tried and sentenced for crimes against humanity. His delegation had supported the adoption of the draft Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/10, and hoped that its adoption by the General Assembly would punish any act of violence against women as a violation of human rights that impaired women's full development and participation in society. Cyprus believed that the rights of women should not be separated from the general body of human rights, and it had ratified not only the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women but also many international conventions containing provisions for equal rights of men and women, such as the European Social Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.

48. Although discriminatory legislation and practices still existed in many societies and impeded the equal participation of women in economic and social development, some progress had been made in recent years. A growing number of women held responsible posts and their pivotal role which included their role in the field of environment, had been recognized. For those reasons, Cyprus welcomed the convening of the Fourth World Conference for the Advancement of Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in Beijing in 1995; the Conference would serve as a platform for addressing such problems as unemployment, poverty and other social problems that affected women more than

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men. The preparatory meetings should be used to implement policies and identify forms of discrimination that needed to be addressed and eliminated. The success of the Conference depended on the active and substantive participation of women's non-governmental organizations in all stages of the preparation and holding of the Conference. In that spirit, at their meeting at Limassol, Cyprus, from 21 to 25 October 1993, the heads of Government of the countries of the Commonwealth had stressed the need, in connection with the World Conference, for a revitalized Commonwealth Plan of Action on Women and Development, and urged all States members of the Commonwealth to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by 1995 and to endorse the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

49. After its foundation in 1960, the Republic of Cyprus had made a rapid transfer from a male-dominated agricultural society to a highly educated society striving for equality of the sexes. That was why his delegation had supported the request of the Commission on the Status of Women that priority should be given to the situation of rural women. Cyprus had organized several seminars and meetings devoted to the needs of rural women, and had adopted a number of legislative measures focused on their special needs (equal pay for both sexes, social security). The 1974 invasion of Cyprus had resulted in heavy losses of human life and economic ruin, and one third of the population had been forced to live in refugee camps. The Republic of Cyprus had been saved by women, especially displaced women, who had taken charge of industry, services and agriculture while keeping families together. The women of Cyprus, whose peace walks and non-violent demonstrations along the green line that separated the island's two communities had been internationally acclaimed, were at the forefront of the struggle for the peaceful settlement of the question of Cyprus. During the recent meeting of the heads of Government of the Commonwealth in Cyprus, more than 40,000 women had formed a human chain.

50. Ms. MANSARAY (Sierra Leone) said that International Women's Year (1975), the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 had heightened the international community's awareness of women's issues and had underscored the important role that women played at the national and international levels.

51. With regard to the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/48/187-E/1993/76), she drew attention to the tremendous challenges in that area, in particular the sharp increase in the incidence of poverty among rural women. She referred to the conclusions of the report dealing with strategies that must be adopted in order to integrate the concerns of rural women into development policies and programmes by ensuring, in particular, equal opportunities to participate in decisions with regard to the allocation and use of resources and improving their access to productive resources, health and literacy programmes and human resources development in which the Division for the Advancement of Women would play a key role both in advocacy and support for the implementation of programmes for rural women.

52. Her delegation attached great importance to the work of the United Nations, in particular those institutions that sought to improve the status of women. In Sierra Leone, education and training and health programmes occupied a significant place in its policy for the advancement of women, since, because of

(Ms. Mansaray, Sierra Leone)

their positive influence on children and the family, women generated better conditions for development and well-being.

53. Her delegation supported the work of UNIFEM in the developing countries and referred to two inter-agency missions in which the Fund had participated in Sierra Leone. In the first, UNIFEM had helped to ensure and assist in the mainstreaming of gender issues in the next UNDP country programme. In the second, the Fund had assessed the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction needs of areas of Sierra Leone that had been affected by war, in particular, the special difficulties facing displaced women and their families.

54. The Vienna Declaration, adopted in June 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights, had reinforced the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by stipulating that the human rights of women were an integral part of their development. Her delegation supported paragraph 18 of the Declaration, which urged the international community to ensure "the full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex". Concerned organizations should press their Governments to implement instruments that integrated women's concerns into the international human rights agenda.

55. With regard to preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, her country welcomed the democratic process under way and thanked those Governments which had contributed or pledged to contribute to the Trust Fund for preparatory activities for the Conference, for it was essential that adequate resources be allocated to convene regional meetings and ensure equitable input from the developing countries.

56. Lastly, her country, which had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1989, reaffirmed that, despite its current economic difficulties, it was determined to participate actively in all international initiatives on women's issues, for only a universal approach could bring about equality among men and women.

57. Mrs. BET-EL (Israel) said that the advancement of women was an important item on the agenda of the Third Committee and that the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held at Beijing in 1995, held the attention of all. Her country was actively preparing for the Conference, which would offer the opportunity to consider the current situation and explore possibilities for changing and improving the role of women in society.

58. The momentous developments in the Middle East had ushered in an era of change which could only enhance the cause of women. Throughout history, whenever war had been a focal point of society, the advancement of women had relegated to a subordinate position among national concerns. Peace, on the other hand, offered women new opportunities. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization had inspired renewed hope for an era of cooperation and prosperity in which the women of Israel and other women of the Middle East, who were equally affected by the tragedy of war, would be able to

(Mrs. Bet-El, Israel)

reach out to one another and, through mutual exchanges, work together to make peace possible. Her delegation thanked all the countries which had assisted in restoring peace in the Middle East and hoped that they also would contribute to the advancement of women in the region. For their part, the women of Israel hoped to participate in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, which had done so much at the international level to advance the situation of women, and to which Israel had so much to contribute as a long-standing Member of the United Nations and as a country in which the equality of men and women was a tenet enshrined in its declaration of independence.

59. The progress achieved in the Middle East unfortunately served as a contrast to the horrors perpetrated in other parts of the world, in particular in the former Yugoslavia. Her country vigorously condemned the rape and abuse of women which, like ethnic cleansing, were monstrous practices which must come before the Tribunal for War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia.

60. Those events proved that, throughout history, women often paid the price of conflicts, whence the importance of the title of the Beijing Conference, "Platform for Action", which prompted the hope that the advancement of women finally would enter the operational phase. While the focus to date had been on examination and analysis, on the threshold of the twenty-first century the time had now come to act, for practice unfortunately had not always kept pace with theory.

61. Her delegation thus welcomed the drafting of the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. While it was true that the clear and unequivocal denunciation of the social ills from which women routinely suffered was a step in the right direction, it was necessary to go further and remedy those ills. That task must be shared equally by men and women, with the support of government bodies and private institutions, and was highlighted by the recognition of the right of women to education, which was, moreover, a useful investment in society as a whole. Educated women not only could contribute more actively to the economic life of their countries, but also were better mothers. Furthermore, in order to ensure that women did not constantly have to struggle to retain their equal rights in society, children of both genders should be taught equality and mutual acceptance.

62. Citing the words of the poet John Donne, she emphasized that men and women belonged to the same human community.

AGENDA ITEM 107: ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (continued) (A/C.3/48/L.13)

Draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.13

63. Mr. SAHRAOUI (Algeria) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.13, entitled "Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination", on behalf of the Group of African States. The document, which was based on the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the

(Mr. Sahraoui, Algeria)

International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights held at Vienna, noted that millions of human beings continued to be the victims of racism and racial discrimination and reaffirmed the determination of the international community to continue the struggle against racism in order to eradicate it totally and unconditionally. The adoption of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination contained in the annex to the draft resolution and the proclamation of the Decade for the period 1993-2003, demonstrated the conviction of the sponsors of the draft resolution that the struggle against racism, in addition to being the responsibility of individual Governments, must involve the entire international community and require the active participation of the United Nations system. The Group of African States hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 113: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/C.3/48/L.21-L.24 and L.26-L.29)

Draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.21

64. Mr. PARSHIKOV (Russian Federation), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.21, entitled "Convening of a United Nations conference for the comprehensive consideration and review of the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants", on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Azerbaijan, said that it was a procedural text which had no bearing on the process relating to the conference. The sponsors simply wished to know whether other States supported their initiative.

65. He drew attention to a correction which should be made in paragraph 2 of the English text. The word "timeliness" should be replaced by "appropriateness", which had originally been used. The editors, in seeking to improve the text, had taken an unfortunate step which distorted the sponsors' intention, for it was not a question of deciding when the conference would be convened, but rather, whether or not it should be convened.

66. He hoped that the text would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.24

67. Mr. NIETO (Argentina), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.24, entitled "Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner for Refugees", on behalf of its sponsors, said that, at its latest substantive session, held at Geneva in July 1993, the Economic and Social Council had in response to a request from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations (E/1993/88) under agenda item 13 (Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), unanimously adopted decision 1993/315 which recommended that the General Assembly should take a decision at its forty-eighth session on the question of increasing the membership of the Executive Committee from 46 to 47 States. Argentina welcomed the fact that Spain, which had always shown a deep interest in issues concerning refugees and displaced persons at both the international and national levels, would soon be represented

(Mr. Nieto, Argentina)

on the Executive Committee. The sponsors hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.26

68. Mrs. SERENIUS (Finland), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.26, entitled "Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", on behalf of 58 States, said that it was a general text incorporating and updating certain portions of the conclusions of the Executive Committee of the Programme and of provisions of General Assembly resolutions. The text emphasized international protection, noted that the number of refugees and asylum-seekers continued to increase and appealed to States for international solidarity and burden-sharing to provide asylum and assistance. It also recommended that prevention, protection and solutions should be addressed on a comprehensive regional basis, expressed deep concern regarding the physical security of refugees, protection of refugees and sexual violence and welcomed the High Commissioner's policy on refugee children and activities undertaken to ensure its implementation.

69. As a result of further consultations, there were four changes to be made. First, a new paragraph should be inserted after the sixth preambular paragraph, to read: "Also noting with satisfaction the participation of UNHCR in the commemoration of the anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration and the OAU Convention on Refugees". Second, in the first line of the tenth preambular paragraph, the words "by individuals" should be added after the words "the misuse". Third, the words "to eligible persons" should be added to the end of paragraph 4. Finally, a new paragraph, based on paragraph 8 of resolution 47/105, should be inserted after paragraph 12; it would read as follows: "Reaffirms the importance of incorporating environmental considerations into the programmes of the Office of the High Commissioner, especially in the least developed countries, in view of the impact on the environment of the large number of refugees and displaced persons of concern to the High Commissioner;".

70. The authors were convinced that the draft resolution would be a useful contribution to the work of UNHCR and that, having been the subject of broad consultations, it could be adopted by consensus.

71. She added that Armenia, Belgium, Brazil, Haiti, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Panama, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America should be added to the list of sponsors.

72. Miss ARGUETA (El Salvador), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.27, entitled "International Conference on Central American Refugees", on behalf of the sponsors, said that Argentina, Belize, Chile, Colombia, Finland, Norway, Panama, Spain and Sweden should be added to the list of sponsors. The draft resolution highlighted the efforts made by all the parties that had participated in the Conference and its follow-up, in the framework of the Concerted Plan of Action in Favour of Central American Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons. The reaffirmation of the will of the Central American countries to achieve a firm and lasting peace and democratization of the region had contributed to the

(Miss Arqueta, El Salvador)

success of the voluntary repatriation and reintegration programmes. The sponsors hoped that the text would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.28

73. Mr. SAHRAOUI (Algeria), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.28, entitled "Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa", on behalf of the Group of African States, noted that Africa had 6 million refugees (one third of the world refugee population), of whom 70 per cent were women and children, and that there were 15 million displaced persons in Africa. Given the critical humanitarian situation that persisted in certain African countries, the international community must show solidarity. Accordingly, the draft resolution appealed to Member States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to provide financial, material and technical assistance for relief and rehabilitation programmes for refugees, voluntary returnees and displaced persons and victims of natural disasters, and to pay particular attention to the special needs of women and children. It also called upon the Secretary-General and the humanitarian agencies to continue their efforts to mobilize humanitarian and financial assistance for the full implementation of ongoing projects in rural and urban areas affected by the presence of refugees and displaced persons.

74. The Group of African States had wished to avoid having a separate resolution dealing with the situation of each State. It had therefore prepared a single draft resolution grouping together specific cases as possible and hoped that the draft, referring as it did to a humanitarian issue, could be adopted by consensus as had been the case the previous year. Draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.22 submitted by Eritrea was being withdrawn, for it had been decided, with the agreement of the Eritrean delegation, that that country's concerns would be included in the joint draft of the Group of African States.

75. He indicated the following corrections to be made in the text: in the fourteenth preambular paragraph, the words "mechanism of prevention, management and repatriation of refugees" should be replaced by "mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution". In the French version of the seventeenth preambular paragraph, the word "entraînent" should be in the singular. The last line of that paragraph, should be replaced by the following: "social situation of Djibouti, which is already suffering from a prolonged drought and from the repercussions of the critical situation prevailing in the Horn of Africa,". In the second line of the nineteenth preambular paragraph of the French version, the words "pour les réfugiés" should be added after the words "le Haut Commissaire". In the second line of the French version of the twenty-fifth preambular paragraph, the words "quant à" should be replaced by "sur".

76. The CHAIRMAN noted that the representative of Azerbaijan, who was to have introduced draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.23, entitled "Emergency international assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan", and the representative of Armenia, who was to have introduced proposed amendments thereto (A/C.3/48/L.29), had requested that consideration of their texts should be postponed to the following meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.